



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chair, House Committee on Finance  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Honorable Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

As Chief of Policy for the City of Providence, I respectfully write in support of **House Bill 5062 - The Rhode Island Early Childhood Innovation Act**. One of the central priorities of Mayor Elorza's administration is ensuring that we are creating conditions for mobility, opportunity, and success for our young people. There is no better investment that we can make as a city and state than investing in the future of our youth. We also know that it is important to start this investment as early as possible, and that empowering parents with the tools necessary to help children develop and be prepared for school is critical.

In Providence, we understand the importance of prioritizing a cradle to career vision, which starts with the most critical early learning years. Within the first three years of life, children develop 80% of their brain and research indicates that the foundation for this rapid development in children is built through loving interactions with parents and caretakers. However, research also shows that children from low-income families will have heard 30 million fewer words than their peers from middle and high-income families by the time they enter kindergarten.

In an effort to close this gap and address the needs of low-income children, the Providence Talks program was developed in 2013 as part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' inaugural Mayors Challenge. The program uses cutting-edge technology to record and count the number of words that children are hearing and conversational turns between parents and child, and in addition to visits by coaches who work with parents to improve their child's progress. The program also offers play groups and helps parents learn the importance of engaging, especially reading to their children from very early on in their lives. Under Mayor Elorza, the City has invested over half a million dollars into this revolutionary early intervention and since its creation, Providence Talks has reached over 2,000 children. In April of 2019, Mayor Elorza announced another \$400,000 investment. Providence Talks is an example of an approach that reaches the kids who need it the most and ensures that children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

With the passage of House Bill 5062 and your support, we can ensure that families will continue to benefit from programs like Providence Talks that allow them to grow and succeed. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to pass this legislation.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration on this important issue. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Diana Perdomo", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Diana Perdomo

### OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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